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INTRODUCTION

On the second day of March 986, after a reign of more than three decades, King Lothar of west Francia died at the age of forty-five.[1] Less than fifteen months later his son and successor Louis, just twenty years old, followed his father to the grave, his death perhaps the result of injuries suffered while hunting.[2] Louis left behind neither sons nor legitimate brothers. Lothar's brother Charles, duke of lower Lotharingia, thus pressed his own claim to the throne.[3] His family, known to us as the Carolingians, had ruled the kingdom almost continually since the middle of the eighth century, but in the tenth century heredity mattered only so much in royal succession. The Frankish magnates elected – or more precisely, participated directly and actively in the succession of – their kings and, even if the power and prestige of the Carolingian line often led them to choose one of its scion, it was not unprecedented for them to raise a non-Carolingian to the throne.[4] In the summer of 987, Charles was

[1] For the date of Lothar's death, see Lot, *Derniers*, 164, in partic. n. 1. Lot's work remains the most comprehensive study of Lothar's reign. For more recent studies of his reign, the events described in this paragraph and, more generally, west Frankish politics during the period covered by this study see also *NCMH*, III: 372–455, in particular Dunbabin, "West Francia, the Kingdom," 372–397; Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 17–123; Ehlers, Müller, and Schneidmüller, eds., *Die französischen Könige*, 13–98; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 258–277 and 305–339; Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, 139–198; Schieffer, *Die Karolinger*, 212–219; and Werner, *Origines*, 469–561. These accounts of the Capetian accession are all based, principally, on the works of Richer of Reims and Gerbert of Aurillac: Richer, *Historia*, ff. 38^{r}–57^{v}, iii.67–iv.109, 206–309; Gerbert, *Correspondance*, *passim*; and a series of accounts of episcopal synods written by Gerbert and published as *Acta Concilii Remensis*, in *MGH*, *SS*, III: 658–693.

[2] Lot, *Derniers*, 196, and subsequent scholars have accepted uncritically the sole account of the cause of Louis' death which is found in Richer, *Historia*, ff. 42^{v}–43^{r}, iv.5, 234–235; see, for instance, Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, 194. As we shall see below and throughout this study, more caution in the use of such details is perhaps prudent. Nevertheless, while we have no evidence to corroborate the cause of Louis' death, I am inclined to agree with Lot, *Derniers*, 166, that we should be dubious of eleventh-century accounts that he was poisoned.

[3] Following Reuter, *NCMH*, III: 388, n. 49, throughout this study I refer to Charles as "Charles of Lotharingia" rather than the more frequently used "Charles of Lorraine," since lower Lotharingia does not correspond well to the Lorraine of today. On Charles and his attempts to claim the throne, see below, Part II.

[4] On the relative importance of heredity, election, and, for that matter, anointing in tenth-century west Francia, see Bezzola, *Ottonische Kaisertum*, in partic. 117–123; Dhondt, "Élection et hérédité";

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passed over when a gathering of magnates led by Archbishop Adalbero of Reims elected Duke Hugh Capet as their king. Hugh was anointed and crowned shortly thereafter, probably in July.[5]

Hugh, who eventually lent his surname to the Capetian dynasty which ruled continuously until 1328, had been among the most powerful of the magnates for more than two decades and could boast a prestigious ancestry, even a royal pedigree.[6] From the late ninth century, his ancestors, also known to us as Robertians, had both cooperated and competed with the Carolingians in the zero-sum game of power politics within the west Frankish lands.[7] His father, branded Hugh the Great (†956), dominated the political landscape of west Francia during the middle decades of the tenth century.[8] His grandfather Robert (922–923) had been raised to the throne and ruled briefly in the early 920s until he was killed in a battle with the Carolingian king against whom he and his supporters had rebelled. Thirty years earlier that king, Charles the Straightforward (893–929), had himself pressed a hereditary claim to the throne and become king in an act of rebellion against Robert's brother, Hugh Capet's great-uncle Odo, who ruled for a decade from 888 to 898.[9]

Ehlers, "Karolingische Tradition"; Schneidmüller, *Karolingische Tradition*, 81–91; Sot, "Hérédité royale et pouvoir sacré avant 987"; and Werner, "Les sources de la légitimité royale." Note also that in my qualification of the magnates' role as participation rather than election per se, I follow the thoughtful presentation of Nelson, "Rulers and Government," in *NCMH*, III: 102.

[5] The date of Hugh Capet's anointing is difficult to determine with certainty. Most recently, Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, 194–198, and Bautier, "L'avènement," 29, have argued for 3 July 987; the latter's discussion and bibliographic notes present the views held by previous scholars, among whom the most important are Lot, *Derniers*, 211–212; Havet, "Les couronnements des rois Hugues et Robert"; and Lemarignier, "Autour de la date du sacre de Hugues Capet." In addition to those works cited above, on the accession of Hugh Capet, see Huth, "Erzbischof Arnulf von Reims."

[6] On the surname "Capet," see Lot, *Derniers*, 320–322. The surname first appears in our sources during the second half of the eleventh century. It is possible that the surname was also used by their contemporaries since, as Lot suggests, the name was also applied to his father, Hugh the Great, and derived from their possession of the monastery of Saint Martin in Tours where the cape (*cappe*) of the saint was stored. In any event, for recent overviews of Capetian France and bibliographic orientation, see Ehlers, *Die Kapetinger*, and Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*.

[7] On the origins of the Robertians and their status in the ninth century, see Werner, "Les Robertiens," which also offers bibliographic orientation.

[8] To my knowledge, there is no contemporary reference to Hugh as "Hugo Magnus," but during the lifetime of his son Hugh Capet and thereafter, in the first half of the eleventh century, he is referred to as such. Richer, *Historia*, f. 19^{v}, ii.30, 119, may indeed be the earliest textual evidence for use of the epithet: "Hugone videlicet cognomento Magno." See also Aimo of Fleury, *Miracula*, ii.3, 99 and 104; Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *De moribus et actis*, iii.47, 192; iv.81, 236; iv.89, 246; iv.93, 250; and iv.101, 263; Rodulfus Glaber, *Histories*, i.6, 14; i.8, 18; and ii.1, 50. I suspect that the epithet represents an attempt both to distinguish father and son and to glorify the namesake and lineage of the Capetian king. In any case, for Hugh's prominence in Frankish affairs in the middle of the century, see below, chapter 11.

[9] For the reigns of Odo, Charles, and Robert, see below, chapter 10. I follow Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 257, and "Rulers and Government," *NCMH*, III: 102, in identifying Charles as "the

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Like both his great-uncle and grandfather, Hugh Capet had been legitimately elected and anointed. Like them, he also had to draw on his military talents and political connections if he wished to establish and secure his rule, for Charles of Lotharingia did not readily abandon his claim to the throne.[10] In 988, Charles seized Laon which had been a Carolingian stronghold throughout the tenth century. And in 989, he took Reims with the help of his nephew, Arnulf, who had succeeded Archbishop Adalbero earlier that year. As Charles' threat to Hugh's rule grew, members of the Frankish political world were increasingly forced to take sides or, perhaps more accurately, to decide how committed they were to their allegiances. Aware of the potential risks and rewards they faced, they weighed their options, reflected on their obligations, and threw their support behind one or another of the men, at least until they had reason to believe that the risks were too great or the rewards insufficient. Then, in the spring of 991, with the conflict in an apparent standoff, the civil war came to an abrupt and, at least in retrospect, decisive end. Thanks to a dramatic sequence of events to be discussed in Part II below, Hugh held Charles safely in his custody, had Arnulf deposed from his office, and replaced him with one of his supporters, a learned and savvy man named Gerbert.[11]

In the wake of these events, a monk at the monastery of Saint-Remigius just outside Reims wrote and rewrote a history dedicated to Archbishop Gerbert.[12] The monk was Richer; the history, his narrative of conflicts among the west Frankish magnates and rulers from the late ninth century to his own day at the end of the tenth. For the earlier portions of his work, Richer drew on a history of the church of Reims and, more extensively, on a set of annals, both written by Flodoard, a canon at the cathedral from early in the century until his death in 966.[13] Richer may also have had recourse to oral testimony and written records no longer available to us: he likely relied on the former and on his own observations in his account of more contemporary events. Throughout, he found rhetorical and stylistic

Straightforward" rather than the more common "the Simple" since Charles is often referred to as "simplex" which, when translated as the latter, can have a pejorative connotation that seems not to have been originally intended in the Latin. For the meaning of *simplex* as it relates to Charles, see Schneidmüller, "Die 'Einfältigkeit' Karls III." The earliest written references to Charles as *simplex* date from the late tenth century. As Eckel, *Charles le Simple*, 140–144, indicates, Richer, *Historia*, f. 5^{v}, i.14, 50, is the first writer to refer to him as such.

[10] For details of the civil war sparked by the Capetian accession which are sketched briefly here, see Part II.

[11] On Gerbert, see below, chapters 3, 5, and 6.

[12] For the dedication, Richer, *Historia*, f. 1^{r}, *Prologus*, 2.

[13] On Flodoard and these works, see below, Part III, in particular chapter 9.

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inspiration in the works of Roman historians and other ancient authors.[14] All told, the history is an impressive and erudite work composed in one of the most dynamic intellectual communities of his day.[15] It ranks with the work of Flodoard as one of the most valuable and important narrative sources for the study of early medieval France and, among select others, for the study of the tenth century. Yet it has not always been so regarded. Rather, its value and importance to scholars has varied and evolved with the development of modern historiography.

Richer's work exists in a single medieval manuscript which was discovered in the early nineteenth century.[16] The manuscript is his autograph, the very manuscript he composed and revised with his own hand over the course of the 990s.[17] In the 1830s, the text was identified and published in an edition which was greeted with excitement and interest by European scholars.[18] The period from the death of Charles the Bald (†877) to the death of Hugh Capet (†996), that is, more or less the period covered by his history and this book, was viewed then as it often is now as the most obscure in the history of France.[19] Richer promised to shed new light on this "dark age" and, as his editor prophesied, to emerge from the shadows of obscurity and "to take his place among the eminent historians of the Middle Ages."[20] Despite the initial and, in some cases, sustained enthusiasm for his text, scholars noted from the beginning that it contained a number of historical inaccuracies, especially in the portion of his history based on Flodoard's annals. While some scholars overlooked

[14] Richer drew on the works of Julius Caesar, Cicero, Hegesippus, Sallust, and Orosius, among others. For discussion of his particular use of the last three in this list, see chapters 7 and 10 below. For references to Richer's use of particular sources, see Hoffmann's useful Stellenverzeichnis in Richer, *Historia*, 315–325. For a more comprehensive discussion of Richer's use of such sources, see Hoffmann, "Richer," 456–465.

[15] On the intellectual community of Reims, see below, chapter 3.

[16] MS Bamberg, Hist. 5; on its discovery and the identification of his text, see appendix A. Note also that there is a nineteenth-century manuscript, Reims, BM 1452, copied from Pertz, *Richer*.

[17] For discussion of the manuscript as an autograph, see chapter 8.

[18] The edition of the text first appeared as *Richeri historiarum libri IIII*, ed. Pertz (Hanover, 1839) and was reprinted that year in *MGH*, *SS*, III: 561–657. Within a few months of the edition's appearance, it was reviewed by Guérard, in *Journal des savants* (1840), 470–489 and 535–556. A few years thereafter, a dissertation on the life and work of Richer appeared: Reimann, "De Richeri vita et scriptis" (Oslo, 1845). By the middle of the 1850s, the text had been translated into German and into French, twice, with facing Latin text: *Richers vier Bücher Geschichte*; Richer, *Histoire de son temps*; and *Richeri historiarum quatuor libri*.

[19] For early statements about the obscurity of the period and Richer's promise to shed light on it, see Pertz, *Richer*, 566; Guérard, review of *Richeri historiarum libri IIII* in *Journal des savants* (1840), 553; and Guadet, *Histoire*, I: vx. Reuter, "Introduction: Reading the Tenth Century," *NCMH*, III: 1–2, has rightly attempted to dispel the problematic and widely held notion that the tenth century is a particularly dark or obscure age of iron and provides references to previous attempts to characterize the period which is, in any case, more poorly documented than subsequent centuries.

[20] Pertz, *Richer*, 566.

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these supposed "errors" or explained them away as the results of Richer's own faulty sources, more frequently they saw in them an expression of Richer's political biases.[21]

Due to these supposed biases, Richer was caught in the crossfire of nationalistic scholarship in France and Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century.[22] According to a number of German scholars, Richer expressed in his work a partiality for the Carolingian dynasty.[23] This claim has typically been based on the convergence of two historiographical traditions. On the one hand, beginning with his first editor, they observed that Richer's father served loyally two Carolingian kings and were therefore inclined to see similar loyalties in Richer.[24] On the other hand, they claimed that Richer was a French nationalist who favored the Carolingians over the Ottonian rulers of Germany in their competing claims for control over Lotharingia, a struggle which resonated with the contemporary conflict between the German and French over the modern Lorraine.[25] The French were generally more forgiving of such apparent

[21] Pertz, *Richer*, 563–565, noted some "errores" and expressed some frustration over them in the brief introduction to his edition.

[22] Babelon, *Les derniers Carolingiens d'après Richer et d'autres sources originales*, xi, explained that he sought "to popularize" Richer's work; he adopted the narrative in such a way that his work appears almost a paraphrase of Richer's text. For less wholesale yet nevertheless uncritical use of Richer, see the following works singled out by Lauer, *Louis IV*, viii: Mourin, *Les comtes de Paris*; von Kalckstein, *Der Kampf der Robertiner und Karolinger*; and Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest*. Otherwise, Guadet, *Histoire*, I: ciii, referred to "un savant français" who attributed some of Richer's errors to problems with his documentation. He did not identify the "savant" or cite his work, but he did cite the 1840 issue of the *Journal des savants*, in which Guérard's review of Pertz's edition appeared. Guérard, "Review," 483–484, said that a man named Lenormant defended Richer against Pertz's critique, but he gave no further details of or reference to this defense. I presume that he is referring to Charles Lenormant, but I have been unable to locate statements about Richer made by this man. In any case, Guadet, *Histoire*, I: ciii–cvii, registered and then critiqued Lenormant's defense.

[23] For examples, see Bezzola, *Ottonische Kaisertum*, 114, n. 32. More generally, for a discussion of scholarship on Richer, see Giese, *"Genus" und "Virtus"*, 10–16.

[24] On Richer's father: Richer, *Historia*, ff. 29^{v}–30^{v}, ii.87–91, 162–164, and f. 32^{r}, iii.7–9, 174–175. For Pertz's comments: Pertz, *Richer*, 561–562. Nearly every subsequent scholar has likewise noted that Richer's father served the Carolingians and thus supposed that Richer did too. Note that, as we shall see in Part III, there are also instances in which Richer appears to express affinities for the Carolingians over the Robertians of the early tenth century. Shortly after the publication of Richer's text, for instance, Guadet, *Histoire*, I: cv–cvi, reluctantly acknowledged one such case and expressed his disappointment in Richer for it.

[25] See, for instance, Wittich, "Richer über Gislebert und Heinrich," 107–108; cf. Hoffmann, "Richer," 470–474. For the fate of Lotharingia during the tenth century, and in particular its relationship to the west Frankish kingdom and the Ottonian empire, see Hauk, "Die Ottonen und Aachen"; Schneidmüller, "Französische Lothringenpolitik"; Zimmermann, "Ottonische Studien," in particular, Part I: "Frankreich und Reims in der Politik der Ottonenzeit," 122–146. For the region in the late ninth and early tenth century, see Hlawitschka, *Lotharingien und das Reich*; Parisot, *Le royaume de Lorraine sous les Carolingiens*; and Parisot, *Origines de la Haute-Lorraine*. And for a general overview of the relationship between the two kingdoms in the tenth century, see Kienast, *Deutschland und Frankreich*, I: 49–148.

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partisanship.[26] Against charges of Richer's "French flightiness," vanity, and patriotism, one prominent French scholar, who had himself studied in Germany, defended and celebrated Richer as the first true French historian and reveled in his "disdain for the Germans."[27] By the end of the century, however, Richer began to emerge from the fray as one of this man's disciples depoliticized somewhat the text. He explained that Richer's bias for the Carolingians with respect to the Ottonians had been overstated and that he did not express particularly strong Carolingian sentiments in any case. As an illustration of this latter point, he noted that Richer was generally receptive to the accession of King Hugh and that he was a disciple of Archbishops Adalbero and Gerbert who, respectively, orchestrated Hugh's accession and sided with him in the civil war which followed shortly thereafter. In this view, often held still today, Richer is supposed to have been sympathetic to the Capetians and therefore to have shared the allegiances not of his father but rather of his masters.[28] Nevertheless, he suggested that the inaccuracies were due less to the monk's political prejudice or national sentiment than to a desire to imitate, albeit ineffectively, such great Roman historians as Sallust and Livy.[29]

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Richer's promise thus remained unrealized. His penchant for using classical models to structure his narrative and to put their words into the mouths of his own characters, together with his political biases, rhetorical flourishes, and tendency to present accounts of events that contrast or even conflict with those found in his own sources, frustrated and disappointed scholars on both sides of the Rhine who sought to develop an accurate narrative of tenth-century politics and the Capetian accession.[30] Instead of entrance into the pantheon of medieval historians, this "imitator of Sallust," as he was labeled

[26] See, for instance, Babelon, *Les derniers Carolingiens d'après Richer et d'autres sources originales*.

[27] For German aspersions cast on Richer, see, for instance, Pertz, *Richer*, 563–565; and Wittich, "Richer über Gislebert und Heinrich," 107–108; and, for a larger sample, Bezzola, *Ottonische Kaisertum*, 109, n. 18. Monod, "Études sur Hugues Capet," in partic. 253–254, delighted in Richer's supposed disdain for the Germans.

[28] See, for instance, Lot, *Derniers*, xvii, and Monod, "Études sur Hugues Capet," 253. For those who share Lot's view, see Bezzola, *Ottonische Kaisertum*, 114. For more recent studies, see Kortüm, *Richer*, and Giese, *"Genus" und "Virtus"*.

[29] Lot, *Derniers*, xvii–xviii. Lot was not the first scholar to note Richer's stylistic reliance on the authors of antiquity. Pertz, *Richer*, 565, suggested as much in a passing comment; and Wittich, "Richer über Gislebert und Heinrich," 107–108, labeled Richer's work "eine Art Geschichtsroman." Lot's attempt to account for Richer's representation of the Frankish past as principally a literary compulsion, however, represented a change of emphasis. For further discussion of Richer's use of Sallust, see below, chapter 7. For further discussion of Richer's political inclinations with respect to Carolingians and Capetians, see below, Part II.

[30] See, for instance, Lot, *Derniers*, xvii–xviii; Eckel, *Charles le Simple*, ix; Lauer, *Louis IV*, x; Dümmler, *Otto der Große*, 163.

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by an editor of the text in the 1930s, was thus more or less cast aside as Flodoard's ugly stepchild.[31]

Yet, Richer's account continued and continues to this day to inform significantly the master narrative of west Frankish politics, in particular the narrative of the last third of the tenth century, as scholars have, for lack of other sources, relied on it, at times uneasily or even unconsciously.[32] Likewise, it has served scholars as raw material for thematic studies of one sort or another. Richer's work has therefore been mined for studies of medicine, education in the tenth century, the lives and accomplishments of Archbishops Adalbero and especially Gerbert, autograph manuscripts, and the evolution of the medieval library in Bamberg, where it now lies.[33] And over the past fifty years scholars have focused increasingly on Richer as an historian; in some cases, they have seen in his text an expression of the mentalité of his day. Their work has deepened not merely our appreciation of the historiographical traditions within which he wrote, his innovations with respect to those traditions, and his rhetorical practices and their place in larger intellectual developments of the tenth century, but also our understanding of kingship and national consciousness in the west Frankish kingdom of the tenth century.[34] It has also revisited the question of Richer's political orientation and, in some cases, has sought to reconcile the two divergent historiographical traditions about it, that is, to explain the presence in his work of material that has led some scholars to argue that he was partisan to the Carolingians and others, that he supported the Capetians. One scholar has, for instance, seen the apparent contradiction in Richer's political sympathies essentially as the result of Richer's own internal struggle with the elements of legitimate rulership; another as the manifestation of the development of an incipient

[31] Following Lot, *Derniers*, xvii–xviii, Latouche, "Un imitateur de Salluste," is responsible for the moniker; see also Richer, *Histoire*, I: xi. The contrast between the modern reception of Flodoard and of Richer, evident in most of the nineteenth-century work cited in the notes above, endures to this day: see, for instance, Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 18–19.

[32] See, for instance, the prominence of Richer in Sassier, *Hugues Capet*.

[33] On medicine: MacKinney, "Tenth-Century Medicine." On education: Lindgren, *Gerbert von Aurillac*, and Riché, *Gerbert*, 40–53. On Adalbero: Bur, "Adalbéron, archevêque de Reims reconsidéré," 55–63. There are many studies that focus on Gerbert and nearly all of them rely in large part on what Richer says about the schoolmaster and archbishop; I cite here only the most recent and standard biography: Riché, *Gerbert*. On autographs, see Hoffmann, "Autographa," 57–58; Garand, "Auteurs latins," 88–89; and Lehmann, "Autographe und Originale." On the library of Bamberg: Hoffmann, *Bamberger Handschriften*, 22–32.

[34] Hoffmann, "Richer"; Kortüm, *Richer*; Giese, *"Genus" und "Virtus"*; Schneidmüller, "Widukind von Corvey, Richer von Reims und der Wandel politischen Bewußtseins"; Schneidmüller, *Karolingische Tradition*, 49–60; Schneidmüller, "Französisches Sonderbewußtsein"; Ehlers, "Karolingische Tradition"; Bezzola, *Ottonische Kaisertum*, 105–123; Leyser, "Three Historians"; Sot, "Richer de Reims"; Sot, "Hérédité royale"; Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*, 116–121; and Sassier, "Richer et le *concilium*" and *Hugues Capet*.

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national consciousness over the course of the tenth century when the west Frankish monarchy was increasingly dissociated from the Carolingians and their traditions and it came to be identified, instead, with the kingdom.[35] Although such recent studies and imaginative hypotheses have informed this book and especially chapter 12, no fully satisfying explanation has yet emerged. Nevertheless, the continued attempts to identify and explain Richer's political biases and, more generally, to exploit his work for such a wide range of topics and themes speak to an enduring optimism among scholars that this somewhat enigmatic text can and will offer up insights into the late Carolingian and early Capetian period, about which we know relatively little.

There is good reason for such optimism. Despite some excellent work on Richer and a growing appreciation of him as a witness to the tenth century, many of the riches of his text have not yet been tapped. His work presents a unique set of opportunities to observe the creative processes of an early medieval historian and thereby to enter into his world. On the one hand, thanks to his own acknowledgments and the work of modern scholars, we know most of Richer's written sources as well as the historical and literary models from which he drew rhetorical and stylistic inspiration. We can therefore compare his historical record with the accounts he found in his sources and thereby consider how he used those sources to develop his own narrative. Likewise, we can contemplate how his use of classical models imbued his narrative with layers of meaning.[36]

On the other hand, we are fortunate to have his autograph manuscript which is among the earliest extant autographs from western Europe.[37] With its layers of revision, the manuscript represents not a coherent whole but rather a frozen moment, perhaps the last, in the evolution of Richer's work in progress. Study of its physical features permits us to distinguish the stages of his composition and thereby to discover, for instance, that the manuscript contains not merely Richer's history, but also fragments of a "*Gesta Adalberonis*" and a "*Vita Gerberti*" which he had previously written and then fused into the history late in its composition.[38] Likewise, the manuscript contains physical evidence which helps us to develop and propose an alternative explanation for some of the apparent contradictions that previous scholars have noted in his political inclinations. At the

[35] See, respectively, Bezzola, *Ottonische Kaisertum*, 114–123, and Ehlers, "Karolingische Tradition," 218–223.
[36] See below, in particular chapters 7 and 10.
[37] Hoffmann, "Autographa," 57–58, suggests that Richer's manuscript represents the oldest substantial work of European literature to have been written entirely by its author from beginnng to end.
[38] See below, appendix D, and Glenn, "Lost Works."

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same time, it permits us to develop a more dynamic picture of what writing the history meant to him and his contemporaries.

These opportunities presented by the manuscript and the text contained therein, particularly the opportunities available in the study of Richer's manuscript, have not yet been fully exploited. With rare exception, scholars who have worked with the text have ignored the manuscript and relied instead on editions that conceal the chaotic reality of a text written in waves of composition and revision over the course of the tumultuous decade following the Capetian accession.[39] At the most basic level, then, this book takes these opportunities to render more comprehensible this text so crucial to our understanding of not merely the political, but also the religious and intellectual culture of tenth-century west Francia, an undertaking all the more appealing now that the manuscript itself is easily accessible in a facsimile edition which appeared in 2000.[40] But the object of this study is neither Richer nor his work per se. Instead, it takes that work as a point of entry into the author's world. It asks what Richer's work and the works of others can tell us about how he and his contemporaries in the religious and intellectual community of Reims dealt with the fallout from the civil war sparked by Hugh Capet's accession in 987 and, more generally, how they engaged in the larger world of Frankish politics. As such, it tells the story of the end of Carolingian rule and the Capetian accession from a new perspective. At the same time, as the title suggests, it offers a sustained reflection on the relationship between politics and historical writing in the tenth century. Ultimately, as a case study, it aims to articulate new possibilities for the study of both early medieval politics and historiography and, for that matter, where the two meet.

The modern study of politics in the early Middle Ages evolved significantly over the course of the last century from an attempt to develop accurate political narratives, often driven by nationalist agendas, into the study of the norms and texture of what can be termed "political culture." During the past two or three generations, traditional boundaries distinguishing social, institutional, legal, religious, intellectual, and political history have been blurred. In studies that focus more and more on the legitimation, demonstration, exercise, or experience of power in local, regional, and even national contexts, scholars have come to ask how politics worked and what sorts of seemingly extra-institutional norms

[39] To my knowledge only three studies, all recent, have made original use of Richer's manuscript: Guillot, "La conversion des Normans," 101–116, 181–219; Hoffmann, *Bamberger Handschriften*, 22–32; and Hoffmann, "Richer." The first two listed here, however, are only indirectly interested in Richer or his work per se.

[40] Richer, *Historia*, ed. Hoffman (Hanover, 2000).

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and strategies guided people's behavior and circumscribed political order. Even as this scholarship has deepened our understanding of the medieval world, the foundations of that understanding have been somewhat shaken in recent years as scholars have grappled with an epistemological conundrum fundamental to historical inquiry:[41] can our source material give us direct access to the world it appears to describe or is it merely textual representation or even mediation without clear resonance in an historical reality of that world? Stated otherwise, is there a social reality in textual representation and, if there is, how do we access and discuss it?

Although in different guises, such questions manifest themselves in two current debates that have significant implications for our grasp of medieval political culture and the workings of power, debates in which Richer's work has been marshaled as evidence, at times for opposing positions.[42] The more wide-ranging of the debates concerns the extent, even the existence of a "feudal revolution" in the decades on either side of the year 1000:[43] do the transformations we see in our sources represent a fundamental and relatively abrupt change in the social and institutional fabric of western Europe, as has typically been supposed, or instead, as has more recently been suggested, a change in the ways that those who wrote our sources represented the reality around them? In other words, do the changes we see in our sources represent a change in language, rhetorical

[41] On the particular manifestation of such currents of thought in the study of medieval history and medieval historiography, see Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text," "Towards a Theory of the Middle Ground," and "Theory into Practice." Compare with Oexle, "Perceiving Social Reality."

[42] Compare, for instance, Bisson, "The 'Feudal Revolution'," 24–25, and Barthélemy, *L'an mil*, 212–257.

[43] For the dominant paradigm of the feudal revolution, see the synthetic work of Poly and Bournazel, *La mutation féodale*; the first edition, published in 1980, was translated into English by Higgitt as *The Feudal Transformation*. For evidence of its dominance, see its articulation in Bois, *La mutation de l'an mil*, translated into English by Shoemaker as *The Transformation of the Year One Thousand*. Dominique Barthélemy first criticized this paradigm in an article in the *Annales* entitled "La mutation féodale a-t-elle eu lieu?" which appears in a modified form together with previous versions of other articles bearing on the issue in Barthélemy, *La mutation féodale a-t-elle eu lieu?* Barthélemy's initial article stimulated a reaction in France and subsequently an intense debate among scholars in Europe and North America. For overviews of the debate, its development, and implications, see Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, xiv–xxiv; Lauranson-Rosaz, "Le débat sur la 'mutation féodale,'" which has also appeared in Spanish and in Italian. The debate took center stage for Anglo-American scholars in a series of articles: Bisson, "The 'Feudal Revolution'"; see also "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution'" with comments by Barthélemy and White and a reply by Bisson in *Past and Present* (1996) 152: 196–223, and by Reuter and Wickham in *Past and Present* (1997) 155: 177–225. Other scholars have engaged this debate in studies of other topics and themes; see, for instance, Geary, "Monastic Memory" and Bowman, "Councils, Memory and Mills." Barthélemy, *L'an mil*, has also recently elaborated his position in relation to the Peace of God. Judging by the contrasting reactions and assessment of reviews of Barthélemy's book by Bowman in *Early Medieval Europe* (2001) 10: 273 and by Paxton in *Speculum* (2002) 77: 135–137, no consensus on the issues under debate is in sight.

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